

106TH CONGRESS  
1ST Session

# H. CON. RES. 144

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Urging the United States Government and the United Nations to undertake urgent and strenuous efforts to secure the release of Branko Jelen, Steve Pratt, and Peter Wallace, 3 humanitarian workers employed in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by CARE International, who are being unjustly held as prisoners by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

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Whereas Branko Jelen, Steve Pratt, and Peter Wallace are 3 humanitarian workers employed in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by CARE International, the relief and development organization, providing food, medicines, and fuel to more than 50,000 Serbian refugees in Serbia and to displaced ethnic Albanians in Kosovo;

Whereas Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace, 2 Australian nationals, were detained on March 31, 1999, and later accused of operating and managing a spy ring and being employed by a spy ring, and Branko Jelen, a citizen of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was arrested 1 week later on the same charges;

Whereas on March 30, 1999, CARE International received a letter of commendation from the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia relating to CARE International's humanitarian work in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

Whereas 1 of the 3 men, Steve Pratt, appeared on Serbian television on April 11, 1999, and he was coerced into saying that he had performed covert intelligence activities;

Whereas the 3 Care International humanitarian workers were held without access to outsiders for 20 days;

Whereas on May 29, 1999, a Serbian military court dismissed every element of the original indictment against the 3 CARE International humanitarian workers, but then proceeded to convict the 3 individuals on an entirely new charge of passing on information to a foreign organization, namely CARE International, and sentenced Pratt to 12 years, Jelen to 6 years, and Wallace to 4 years;

Whereas this last charge was introduced at the reading of the verdict, denying lawyers for the 3 CARE International humanitarian workers any opportunity to mount an appropriate defense;

Whereas it appears the 3 CARE International humanitarian workers were convicted of providing "situation reports" to their head office and other CARE International offices around the world, based on legitimately gathered infor-

mation, necessary to enable CARE International management to plan their humanitarian assistance in a rapidly changing context and to inform CARE International management of the security situation in which their staff were working;

Whereas the convictions of the 3 CARE International humanitarian workers raise serious questions regarding the ability of humanitarian aid organizations to operate in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with implications for their operations in other areas of conflict around the world;

Whereas the 3 CARE International humanitarian workers are innocent, having committed no crime, and are being held as prisoners unjustly;

Whereas the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia needs humanitarian workers who feel secure enough to do their work and who are not at risk of going to prison on false charges; and

Whereas many leaders around the world have raised the issue and sought to free the captives, including United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, former South African President Nelson Mandela, Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson: Now, therefore, be it

1        *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*  
2 *concurring)*, That the Congress—

3            (1) urges the United States Government and  
4        the United Nations to undertake urgent and stren-  
5        uous efforts to secure the release of Branko Jelen,

1 Steve Pratt, and Peter Wallace, 3 humanitarian  
2 workers employed in the Federal Republic of Yugo-  
3 slavia by CARE International; and

4 (2) calls upon the Government of the Federal  
5 Republic of Yugoslavia to send a positive signal to  
6 the international humanitarian community and to  
7 give these humanitarian workers their freedom with-  
8 out further delay.

Passed the House of Representatives July 12, 1999.

Attest:

*Clerk.*